

COVER PAGE

ADVENTURES OF A PIONEER
MANUELINHO ANTON DASILVA
"KNOWN AS "SONNY"
1871-1951

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Submitted by:
By Muriel Lucas

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Manuelinho Anton DaSilva, better known as "Sonny" and a well known "Lion Hunter," was one of the founders of the Goan Institute, Nairobi and Mombasa. Generous to a fault, this noble-hearted man helped hosts of his countrymen, bringing them out to East Africa and settling them up in businesses. Goa is proud of her son. He raised the prestige of Goans and to East Africa, he has given 60 years of his life.

He withheld no grudge, no toil, nor did he seek any sordid gain, and feared no foe. He surmounted all the perils and endured all the agonies of the past. He prevailed over the dangers and problems he encountered in his life with great strength and fortitude.

In 1950, Jubilee Year of Nairobi, finds this early pioneer, then 80 years old, living a life of leisure on his orchard farm in Uganda, East Africa. This old man, relived memories of his early years in Nairobi, Kenya, East Africa, the land of his dreams, "The Dark Continent."

I dedicate this book to my mother, REGINA OLIVIA DASILVA, 4TH CHILD OF SONNY AND JOSEPHINE DASILVA AND TO THE REST OF THE DASILVA FAMILY.

ADVENTURES OF A PIONEER
MANUELINHO ANTON DASILVA
KNOWN AS "SONNY"

1871-1951

By Muriel Lucas (grand-daughter)

INTRODUCTION

Manuelinho Anton DaSilva, known as "Sonny" was
One of the Founding Fathers of the Nairobi Goan Institute and Mombasa, East Africa. (1911)
His name was included in the earliest books under the East African Protectorate as it was
then known.

His Adventures:

Manuelinho Anton DaSilva, was born to Goan parents, John Michael and Maryanne DaSilva, in Hubli, India. His father worked for the Railways in Hubli as an engine driver, serving passengers from Hubli to Bombay, (now Mumbai), and back.
(He had 2 sisters named Sara and Bella and 2 younger brothers, named Joseph and Conrad. In later years, Sonny kept his promise to bring his siblings out to Kenya. The two brothers joined him in Kenya. Joseph eventually lost his life in Kenya and Conrad passed away in Kampala - Uganda. Only sister Sara came out to Nairobi but returned after many years to her birthplace. Both sisters passed on in India.)

This stalwart, dashing, 6ft. handsome young man, DaSilva, known to most as "Sonny," (nickname given to him by his parents), left his homeland in Hubli, India, as a young lad, discontent with home life and with the lust for wandering and adventure in his blood, hearing of the "Dark Continent" Africa, fired up his imagination, of one day becoming a big Game hunter, much to the grief of his parents, ran away from home, joined a ship, and sailed the high seas, bound for Africa. Braving his escape, he worked his passage as a deck hand and landed in Zanzibar, East Africa. Being fascinated about the "Dark Continent", his footsteps finally led him to settle down in Zanzibar, EastAfrica, which he used only as a 'stepping stone.'

This Goan lad who was later rose to the fame of 'Lion Hunter' and acknowledged a "crack shot" by the white pioneers, obscurely worked as a Doctor's Compounder in Zanzibar. But the love for hunting soon took possession of him and, having saved sufficient funds to buy a rifle, he practised target shooting in his spare hours, until he was capable of shooting straight.

Sonny's hunger and thirst for big Game Hunting, finally led him to Kenya, East Africa, in 1894. He was one of the earliest Goan settlers in Nairobi. He met and befriended many important ditnitarries, such as Nairobi's earliest European pioneers. In 1897 A phogograph with, Kitchin of Smith Mackenzie, the first man to grow Coffee in Kenya at Dagoretti, and Captain F.S.Dugmore, Commander of Ngong Fort and C.R.W. Lane, and Mrs. James Martin and F.G Hall., can be viewed under www.Goacomn.

Sonny is also seen with the head Laibon of the Masai with Sir Arthur H. Hardinge, Commissioner, of what was then known as the East African Protectorate, in 1898.

When a Captain Lugard went over to Uganda, Frederick Jackson and Sonny accompanied him. Later the former, became Sir Frederick Jackson , first Governor of Uganda. During the first Uganda mutiny, Sonny was summoned to accompany Jackson to help quell the mutiny. He was highly commended for his services.

He eventually worked for the Kenya Government as a Clerk, under a James Martin, a Maltese, who was in charge at Eldama Ravine. He handled all the administrative work. But, as time moved on, he was restless and anxious to pursue his dream. Hence, it wasn't too long after, he made up his mind to resign from the Government and took up freelance hunting.

His adventures led him in trekking to Mombasa with a caravan, to sell his ivory at the Coast. In the "Jubilee History" of Nairobi, he is photographed by Dr.Boedeker, With the early pioneers of Nairobi.

Bold, daring and fearless & a "dead shot, he rose to fame throughout East Africa as a renowned "Goan Hunter"

The pinnacle of his life of hunting really took off, when Theodore Roosevelt heard about him and wrote to him through a Major Saunderson requesting him to accompany his son Kermit on a hunting expedition. A letter from the White house stating the above is in our possession and can also be read thru' the GOACOM website. From time to time other American & European personalities also engaged his services for big game hunting expeditions.

In 1909, when Theodore Roosevelt visited Nairobi, Sonny , (now known as "Lion & Elephant hunter), was engaged as one of the hunters on Roosevelt's hunting trip.

One notable feat of his, recorded in DRUNKMIES Book of East Africa, was when he shot a menacing lioness on Race-course Road, in Nairobi.

Word spread like wildfire, that DA Silva was a crack-shot with a rifle, and hence was approached by the Government to help hunt down a "man-eating lioness", who was becoming a threat and menace to the local folk and their livestock. The Lioness was seen by many, roaming the streets and around Nairobi city. Well, Sonny did not waste any time, and picked up his hunting gear and headed out in search of the menacing lioness. It did not take Sonny long to encounter the lioness, and single-handedly, loaded with a 16 bore shot gun, shot the menacing lioness on Race Course Road, Nairobi, much to the relief of the Kenya Government and local folk, who were then able to live without any fear. Sonny was considered a Hero!

This incident took place at the turn of the century and a photograph capturing this scene was printed in the local Nairobi newspapers, which shows Sonny, with his 16-bore-shot gun. The picture was taken at the sight of the then Norfolk Hotel, now Haile Selassie Avenue). One of the early pioneers, Major Ross is seen holding the 16 bore shot-gun, and seated next to him is Sonny. In the picture is Sonny's brother, Joseph, who was lost in the forest when he was returning to Nairobi after delivering a consignment of ivory at the Coast. Joseph, sadly was never to be seen again! The search continued to find his lost brother, scanning the area around, but to no avail. This broke Sonny's heart. The incident is mentioned in a book by "John Boyes," - King of the Wakikuyu. And this picture is posted on the GOACOM archives.

Sonny continued his life as a freelance hunter, joining many others on several hunting expeditions, to help the local folk in the surrounding areas of menacing Lion and Elephants around!

After many adventurous years in Kenya, by a twist of fate, life changed around, drastically for Sonny. An unfortunate incident happened when Sonny was in the company of many Colonial friends during a friendly get-together. It is believed that one of the individuals, slurred a very derogatory remark to Sonny, to which, he did not take very lightly, and challenged his opponent to a fist fight outside. The incident caused a major stir around the city and Sonny was, after lengths of trials, trying to defend himself, but lost his case. (During the colonial era, it was unheard of anyone trying to get the upper hand, against the "wazungu"). But – Sonny stood up for "human rights and dignity" but, unfortunately lost his case. He was thus banished out of Kenya for good. He was very saddened by this, but held his head up high and put his best foot forward and accepted his fate with immense strength and fortitude. It was a grim and evil fate, but he never believed it did any good to flinch, or yield for any blow, nor did it lighten the blow to cease from carrying on...

Thus put paid to his hunting years in Kenya for good! – A place and a sport he loved with all his heart!

However, The British Government took into consideration, his long and loyal services and awarded Sonny with 10 acres of land in Uganda, East Africa, in a town called Ngora, which was located in the Teso district of Uganda. Thus opening up a whole window of opportunity and destiny that knew no bounds!

MEMORIES OF NGORA

Undaunted by this major set-back in his life, Sonny said goodbye/KWAHERI to Kenya with a heavy heart and made his way to Uganda, "Pearl of Africa" (as Sir Winston Churchill named it). And as soon as he set foot in his new surroundings, and took a long gaze at this barren land that was awarded him, he envisioned an even greater dream, that has come to surpass in the following story. His life was the glory of work and the joy of living!

No sooner had he "put down his rifle", he picked up a "Shovel", "Hoe" and "Spade" and turned this barren land in Ngora, into a flourishing Orchard farm, and made this his

"Paradise" home. He planted numerous tropical fruit trees, such as, pineapple, oranges, lemons, limes, grapefruit, papayas, Pommmergranates, a variety of bananas, from small finger yellow skinned bananas to the largest purple skinned ones. Passion fruit, Jackfruit, custard apples, bulls-heart, Mangoes galore, Corn and sugarcane. Some of these fruit trees he purchased from Goa, India He put his heart and soul into building a comfortable home for himself. He grew to love his beloved Ngora for the rest of his life.

But, something was still missing in Sonny's life, it was family. So he decided it was time to settle down and went back to Belgaum, to visit his sister Sarah, who encouraged him further in his search for a fair maiden. He approached the nuns in a convent for a beautiful young girl's hand in marriage. Her name was Josephine Fernandes, (an orphan) from Goa, raised by the nuns. It was no easy task, after the long and tedious interview with the nuns, Sonny, used his charm and finally won Josephine's hand in marriage! It was here that he hitched his wagon in the old traditional way, and married the lovely Josephine, and took her home to his lovely little domain, Ngora, and raised 14 children: 8 daughters and 6 sons. (A male, unfortunately, died at birth)

The DA Silva children were well known by the Goan Community, in Kenya, and Uganda. The older children, eventually "flew the coop" and settled in Kampala, and Nairobi. Their names are, Mike (Maggie) Elvira (Reise D'Souza-Peter Uvenhoven), Freddie (Gertrude), Regina (Joseph Rebello), Evelyn (Leo Lobo), Felix, Clara (Michael Lobo), Barbara (Pius Fernandes), Patricia, (Joe Vianna), Eric, (Doris), Iris (Conrad D'Souza), Edwin, (Doris), Donald, Margaret- (Batu Fernandes). Sonny and Josephine were surrounded by numerous grand-children, and great- great-grandchildren., who are now all scattered abroad, and mainly in Canada.

Excerpts of the following have been researched by the writer through, her Aunt, Iris. Who lives in Guelph, Ontario. She is widowed, and has 6 children. After retiring from a full time job, she had been active in volunteering her services by working at a Drop-In Centre in Guelph, which was funded by Sister Christine, assisting with serving meals to the homeless. She also offered prayers for the people that frequented the kitchen. The nuns she worked with at the Centre were Sister Jude and Sister Susan, together with Sister Jude's twin sister, Sato. Although Iris is now fully retired she still keeps in touch with the nuns, who now reside in White River, Ontario, assisting the First Nations.

Sonny and Josephine, sent their 3 eldest children, Michael (Mike), Elvira and Regina, (The writer's mother) to school in Belgaum, India. They lived with his sisters, Bella and Sarah who cared for them, till their return to Ngora, after a span of 3 years.

The 2 other children, were sent to study with the nuns at St. Josephs convent in Ngora. The rest were sent to local schools in the surrounding area. Having been raised in the Teso District, the whole family spoke the local dialect, Teso, and would often speak it when gathered together.

The children in later years, after they left home, resided in Kenya, and some in Uganda. After the unfortunate situation with the Idi Amin' brutal Regime, who changed Uganda's destiny, they all scattered and left their homeland, and settled in Canada, the U.K. and Goa, India.

Sonny worked at a Cotton Ginnery, mainly as a buyer, for the British Government. With the help of the Lorry driver, they would venture to the (Chalo) villages, where he would gather the cotton and load it on to the van to be taken to the Ginnery, about 5 miles out of town. All the native people in the surrounding areas, within a 10 to 12 mile radius knew the "SURUJA" FAMILY, nickname, given to Sonny by the local folk. His children were known as "Mutoto ya Suruja".

As their children grew into teenagers, especially the daughters, there were many suitors who approached Sonny for his daughters' hand in marriage.

He was very well respected by all who knew him. The district Commissioner, Assistant district commissioner, chiefs, & elders would visit with him. His entertainment place was under the (Miyembe) mango trees. He would sell some of the fruit to the European settlers for very little money.

Every year on All Souls Day, Christmas and Easter Josephine and Sonny would invite the local Catholic priest to say Holy Mass on the farm. Even though the natives were poor they would bring eggs, chickens, and anything they grew on their land as an offering to the priest. Even their last penny – just like in the Bible where the woman gave her last pennies. (This was witnessed by my father, Joseph Rebello and my sister, Mozina Noronha one Christmas). On these special holidays, together with the domestic servants, Josephine cooked food for all the disabled and disadvantaged, especially those afflicted with ailments. They provided Beef, Mutton, Sweet potatoes, Rice, Ground Nut Sauce (Atapa), Millet, Tea and Water. Even the healthy villagers would come to the farm, knowing that they would be fed. People would flock from miles around. They would line up one by one to a heaped helping of food served on banana leaves. Some would take food home to feed their families. Some came with containers. All the children and neighbours would pitch in and help them serve the hungry. The cooking pots were these huge Handas from Goa India.

HEAVEN ONLY KNOWS WHERE JOSEPHINE AND SONNY GOT THE MEANS TO FEED, NOT ONLY THEIR CHILDREN, BUT THE WHOLE VILLAGE!

The children, after their marriages, would visit the farm for get-togethers, where Josephine still lived after Sonny passed away. Josephine also visited Budongo, near Murchison Falls. My parent's home, and later lived with us in for a while in Pangani, Nairobi.

Sonny helped the local children when they were sick, especially with malaria and other ailments. He would pass on his knowledge to everyone who needed advice on medication, especially to the parents, so that they, in turn, would be able to help their families. He treated his own children when they fell ill. Doctors were hard to come by. He treated a young 14 year old African boy, who had a fishing hook embedded in his thigh. With his knack and skill, he gently removed it and treated the gash with local medicine. He took pride and patience in teaching the local children to read and write in his spare time.

During the war, the British soldiers were on their way from the Port of Mombasa, to Juba, (Ethiopia or Sudan, not sure). The convoy would be about 20 to 30 lorries full of soldiers.

They would stop at Ngora and Sonny would give them, the fruits of his labour - mangoes, oranges etc, as well as spring water from their well. In turn the soldiers would give him Bully Beef and Biscuits.

The Indian Businessmen, used to ask Sonny to write their letters for them and in turn on each Religious day, Hindus, Muslims, Arabs, Somalis & Sikhs would send food to this well known Goan family. He was friendly with each and every one living in the surrounding neighbourhood. There was never a dull moment in Ngora. Families would visit from time to time, and especially on School holidays, and Christmas! Those were happy years, those early years. The hustle and bustle, visitors passing through would stop for a break and Sonny and Josephine were ever so accommodating, welcoming them to refreshments, before they continued on their journey!

Sonny was a proud, strict, but the kindest man one could ever encounter, and very understanding too! The children would roam the swamps and hills without shoes, knowing there were snakes around. He let them have their own adventures as he did his. They played with their "pet" donkey, who's name was Peter. They trained him to carry water on his back with pails, from the "MUTONI" (Spring water) for their daily chores.

He was an avid reader. The back verandah was full of hard cover books. Volumes of novels were sent to him by his oldest children.

He would often gather the rest of the younger children to recite the Rosary, and after a meal, would sit under the famous Mango tree and around a bonfire, and misty eyed - lovingly related his hunting days, in Kenya – East Africa.

In 1951, Sonny fell seriously ill, in his last years of his life. His wishes were to be buried back in the place that he truly loved, Nairobi, East Africa. The family wasted no time in making necessary arrangements, to accompany him, on his death-bed, on his journey back to Nairobi – Kenya – where he lived his ailing years,, until his end had come. He passed away peacefully, with his eldest children rallying around his bedside, as he took his last breath. Years later, his eldest son Mike, then living in Nairobi, is also buried in the same grave, on Forest Road, Nairobi. Thus Sonny's wish was granted, buried in his beloved land, Nairobi – Kenya., East Africa, - the land of his dreams!

Josephine wished to be buried under the famous Mango tree, in her beloved Ngora. Her grave still lies intact considering the destruction of the whole of Uganda by Idi Amin's brutal regime. It is well taken care of by the maid's children, to date.

Iris and Clara, (the two younger DaSilva daughters), returned to Kampala, Uganda in the '80's. They found Kampala still in a state of destruction, and could not proceed to Ngora, as it was too risky a trip at the time.

However, Iris, who has been corresponding with some of the villagers in Ngora, informed them that she would be visiting Ngora and in December 2004, she made a return trip and was accompanied by her loyal friends, Vincent and Ida Frances and Delma Lobo, who reside in Cambridge, Ontario. (Ida, was the former Secretary of the Dr. Ribeiro Goan School, Nairobi, East Africa).

They made a special trip to our beloved Orchard Farm, Ngora. On arrival, they were surrounded by the delightful children of the maid that looked after them when growing up. Word quickly spread that Iris was there and the farm was packed with villagers and children. Just as kind as her parents, Iris distributed clothing, pens, pencils, erasers crayons etc. that she had collected from friends and family in Canada. Sad to say, that Iris was shocked to see the house was no longer there, broken to the ground and the place was desolate with not one fruit trees around. The grass was dry, dry, dry! Standing misty eyed and reminiscing of days gone by and picturing Sonny, their father, sitting under the mango and Anjuna tree, in his rocking chair, reading his book, while the siblings, ran and played, was heart wrenching indeed. They barely spent an hour, as their taxi driver was anxious to take them back to Kampala before it got dark and also to avoid being accosted by robbers. She left with a heavy heart – knowing full well, there will never be a return trip ever!

As they blew their kisses, across the lonely grave, they knew the one who helped toil the land and reared 14 children, wasn't "buried" In the ground – but in the hearts of the DaSilva family. A loving mother /grandmother Josephine and a loving Father/Grandfather's memory, still vivid in their minds.

Sonny's hunting photo album got misplaced. It should have been donated to the Nairobi) Museum in Kenya East Africa for the enjoyment of all.

To date, our neighbours in Ngora, "Okalet's" (the maid's) children live on SURUJA'S LAND. His MEMORY WILL NEVER DIE. FROM SON TO SON, DAUGHTER TO DAUGHTER, THEY WILL CARRY ON HIS NAME.

Goa is proud of her son, but even more proud of their beloved Father were his 14 children, and in their hearts he is loved and revered.

The DaSilva children are blessed to have been born to this great man and to have been born and raised in Ngora, Uganda, East Africa, once known as the "PEARL OF AFRICA". The grandchildren, are very proud of their ancestry! We will pass this story of our legendary Grandfather on to our children and children's children, with the hope, that someday, thru' the passage of time, one can return to this beloved land, and rebuild Ngora, and keep "SURUJA'S Memory alive – God willing!

But, somewhere, on Forest Road in a quiet Cemetery, where the gentle breezes blow, lies the one we all love so deeply and lost a century ago. The family chain is now broken and nothing seems the same, but every time we think of him, we remember, from stories passed down, this loving, generous, & kind man, who is none other than the famous valiant Goan Hunter, Sonny Manuelinho, Anton Da Silva, and his illustrious name! - A man who made history, in a time and place he loved so well, and I am proud to be his granddaughter!

Muriel Lucas.

15th December, 2009

In Appreciation:

I wish to thank my Aunt Iris who assisted with a detailed account of her Father's life in Ngora. She presently resides in Guelph, Ontario. And my sister Zena Noronha, who resides in Kitchener, Ontario, and my eldest sister Mabel, (U.K.) for their assistance, imparting info about my Grandfather as they remember him by. Many thanks also go out to my Aunt Evelyn, who lives in Willowdale, Ontario, for her assistance and feedback of memories of her Father.

Thanks also goes out to my brothers Rowland and Ruben Rebello, who reside in Mississauga, Ontario, for sharing their stories and recollections, when they visited Ngora as young lads. Without their input, I would not have been able to relate and capture my Grandfather's true life story.

Special thanks go out to Mr. John J. D'Souza, who resides in Brampton, Ontario, who first inspired me to write this book and story of my Grandfather. He has been instrumental in posting all past and present submissions of my Grandfather on the Goacom website.

THE END
